



[\(Mark Kensett\)](#)

Liturgy in a Dangerous Time #5

simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy

Sunday 17 May 2020



(Emma Moreton)

‘...she will rejoice in
time to come’

Proverbs 31.25

simonjcross.com/dangerous-liturgy

A welcome

Welcome once again to Liturgy in a Dangerous Time, a gentle and honest exploration of faith, locked down humanity and the insurgency of the divine through a diverse range of voices, experiences, and perspectives.

Expect to find things here that you instinctively appreciate, and things you struggle with a little. Know that for each of us our experiences of life are different – and this colours how we understand what we see and hear.

This week we have taken a turn towards aspects of female experience and questions of time, among other things, as always if you have something you would like to contribute, please just let us know. Please use these resources in whatever way seems right to you, respecting copyright where it is clearly marked.

An opening

We who read this,
Together and apart,
Are navigating a path through a series
of disjointed moments.
Moments in which time has lost much
of the meaning it once had,
When many of the certainties of fixed
points have been removed from us.
We are set adrift in a sea of
strangeness.
Looking for the shore.

A prayer

Help us, O Lord
For we so easily judge others and
ourselves:
Framing our views with unrealistic
expectations
and a lack of grace
That we never receive from you...
For you delight in us.
Help us, O Lord

For we are exhausted:
Tired from carrying the burdens
of un-forgiveness and un-forgiveness.

Some of us feeling busier than we
have ever been

some of us bored out of our minds

Most of us worrying that we are not
doing or being 'enough'...

Yet you promise your yoke is easy,
and your burden light.

Help us, O Lord

For we are fearful

distracted

wrestling with doubt and worry...

Yet you are sufficient.

Thank you, O Lord

That even in these strangest of times
when everything can feel different,
disjointed and disconnected...

you are busy - creating beauty, hope,
love, possibility

still asking us to join in the dance as
we are able

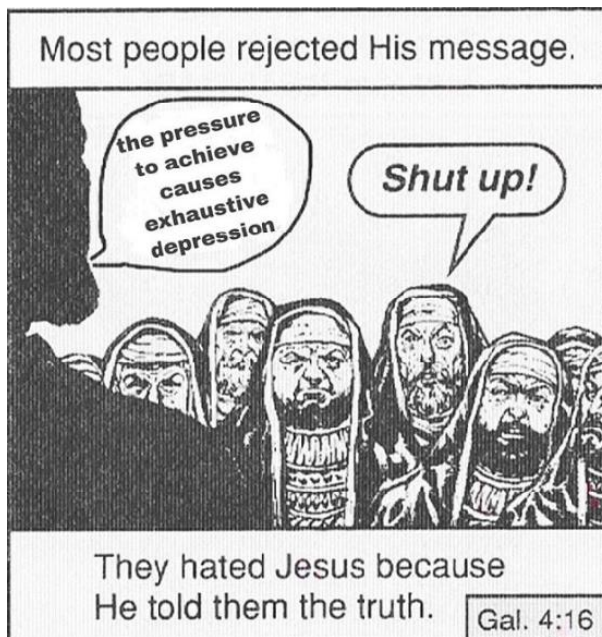
still loving us relentlessly.

(Andy Campbell)



**silence
does
good
to the
soul**

St Therese de Lisieux



(Barry Taylor)

A poem

On being no longer good enough...

I have long believed in 'good enough',
But now there are days when I can't
even get to 'good enough'.
Lists still exist, no crossing off.
The books unopened, unread.
The clutter still cluttering.
The good intentions weighing me
down.
I look in the mirror and see shame on
my face.

Shame, that I am not a 'good enough'
person today.

Shame, debilitating, demoralizing, de-
energising.

It's a vicious spiral downwards on
those days when

who I am is not 'good enough'.

This strange new world has
challenged my equilibrium,

as I navigate new paths, with twists
and turns I can't anticipate.

But deep within, beyond these
feelings there's a small voice
trying to be heard over all the
clamouring conflicting thoughts in my
head.

It's a voice which says, come to me,
come to me, my beloved weary one, I
will give you rest.

But it's so hard to hear, to obey when
so much of my faith
has been about doing, and now I can't
always do, it's hard.

Striving to be 'good enough' needs to
cease,

I need to embrace this moment and
remember that

who I see in the mirror is not who I
am and that to God

I am 'good enough'.

[\(Sally Nash\)](#)



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A reminder

“It is well” was written in the 19th
century after a series of traumatic
events in the life of the writer.

[Listen to this acapella version](#) by
Sounds Like Reign.

[\(Sounds Like Reign\)](#)

A practise

Slowly concentrate on your breathing,
let your eyes close gently.

Breathe in peace

Breathe out tension

••••

Breathe in acceptance

Breathe out expectation

Find a place of quietness within.

A monologue

Enjoy [this extraordinary speech](#) from
‘Two Noble Kinsmen’ by Amaka
Okafor and her daughter Bilqis. From
a project led by Elliot Barnes-Worrell.

[\(Amaka Okafor\)](#)

A reading

John 14:15-21

See [a version here](#).

An icon



The first Christians endured a time of extreme crisis, when it seemed that Jesus was dead and gone. The first witnesses to the truth were women, and as they proclaimed that hope had been restored in the resurrection they were met with disbelief.

In all four Gospel accounts, Mary Magdalene is among the women at the tomb (alone in John's Gospel). She had come to Jesus broken, with many demons, she had learnt from him, many believe that she is the woman who anointed his feet with

expensive perfume, she watched as he died and faithfully came to the tomb with spices early in the morning. As a church, we mirror her journey with our brokenness, learning, praise and faith.

Just as Mary Magdalene spoke God's truth to the apostles, as a church we should be ready to speak God's truth in the here and now. With a quarter of people tuning in to online services, it is our time to shout from the rooftops that radical love (the same love which expelled demons from Mary), which fights for the powerless in society. It is time for us to use our prophetic voice to speak truth to power, and challenge the government when more BAME are dying of coronavirus than anyone else. We are called to challenge the structures of society which oppress people. The resurrection is about more than we think, God's Kingdom is about justice and mercy, as we walk alongside Jesus, just as Mary did.

[\(Charlotte Gibson\)](#)

A song

[Click here to listen](#) to “In these moments” by Steve Bird

Heavenly father, Heavenly Father
Hallowed be your name, Hallowed be
your name,
Your kingdom come and your will be
done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
In Heaven

In these moments,
In these moments
I'll wait for you; I'll wait for you.

You've prepared a table before me
In the presence of my enemies
You anoint my head, my head with oil
Fill my cup till it over flows
In Heaven

In these moments,
In these moments
I'll wait for you; I'll wait for you.

(Chorus)

Holy is the Lord Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
Light has come to banish all darkness
Victory in your name; Victory in your
Name

Hands that hold, Hands that heal
Hands that never let me go
I'll hold onto you, fix my eyes on you
It's when I fall you are near, you are
near

In these moments,
In these moments
I wait for you; I wait for you.

Chorus

Words and Music © Stephen Bird



A reflection

(Photo by [Ben White](#) on [Unsplash](#))

Our present circumstances have prompted me to spend a lot of time thinking about the nature of time itself. Most days, I feel as though time has lost all its meaning. I look back to when we first went into lockdown, and the time since then seems to have slowed right down. It's as though we have been suspended, caught in the middle of whatever we were doing, our speech suddenly muffled and echoing, and our bodies slow-moving, as though wading through thick liquid. At the same

time, in my mind's eye, events in the future seem to be hurtling forward at the speed of a bullet train. Things I thought I would have plenty of time to prepare for are suddenly looming inexorably, and I feel like Alice in Wonderland falling down, down the rabbit hole towards them, reaching out for a chair leg or a piano foot to steady myself, to give myself just a little more *time*, to be ready. I am not ready. I need more time.

Time. Suddenly there is so much of it, pockets of it opening in unexpected

places, columns in diaries emptying, projects fleeing, people retreating, ideas receding, as if to a warmer country far away, to await a time to return in safety. I'm convinced that my surreal, dream-like musings on the nature of time are mostly prompted by the unknown and the unknowable of our present reality. How much longer? We can't know. We have no roadmap and no way-marker; almost every email in my inbox reminds me that these are truly unprecedented times.

Time. Much of Jesus' farewell discourse is spent discussing the nature of time as revelation. "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever". Jesus says that the Spirit abides with his disciples, and will be in them in time to come. "I will not leave you comfortless, but I will come to you, I will come to you, and your hearts will rejoice". In English, this paragraph (John 14. 15-21) features a variety of future tenses: simple future, future continuous, future perfect. Jesus' promises and predictions

comfort me in their encompassing of time and the time to come, the grammatical structure speaks of some of my hopes for our future; simple, perfect, continuous.

Kairos, time made special, made holy by God

In the gospels there are two different words for time; there is Chronos time measured in seconds and minutes and hours. And there is Kairos, time made special, made holy by God. Kairos refers to an opportune moment, time measured by its quality, not its quantity. Time running on a different track to the clock, shaped by its direction towards the Kingdom of God. The time during the eucharistic prayer, when the priest steps into the place of Jesus, saying "Take, eat, this is my body, this is my blood, this is my life given for you." This is Kairos time. It is different. Holy. Collapsed. In that moment we are united with Christ, and with Christians

everywhere in every time and place, and he is united with us. The time before, and the time that will come, they lose their definition, their edges blur and bleed. It is now, and it is then, and it will be. It is now and not yet; it is one and the same.

“If you love me” says Jesus, “you will keep my commandments”. We know what those are. It is love. Love is all we need, and all we need is love.

Those who keep Jesus’ commandments are those who love him, and those who love Jesus will be loved by God. Simple future.

Simplicity itself. Our future is caught, suspended, held in the endless and timeless love of God who is without time. Jesus says “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.” Usually when I think of no longer seeing Jesus, I think of the triduum: the tabernacle door hanging open, revealing the defeated and dark empty space within. In a little while, in a little while. These days I don’t need to think of anything abstract, because I know the reality of not

seeing Jesus at the altar, in my hands. I know in every fibre of my being the pain of separation, of not being able to see, taste, touch.



(Photo by [Anne Nygård](#) on [Unsplash](#))

And though I know God’s time is not ours, I’m finding the evasiveness of time-frame really hard to navigate; “A little while longer, when this is over, we will meet again, we will, *we will*, if we are cautious now, when we return, in a little while.” When, though? Tell me when! Give me dates, times! Let me write it in my diary, let me send emails, let me plan. These are all different ways for me to say “I am scared, tell me what will happen. I need to know. I am frightened.” I’m oddly comforted that, on this

occasion, Jesus doesn't say "do not be afraid". Instead his words create space for the intrinsic human reality of fear of the unknown. Anxiety, the gap between here and there. In a little while, I will not be here. You *will* see me, but there will be a time when you *won't* see me. There is space, and there is love to hold the fear.

In a similar way, the truest rendering of the Hebrew in Proverbs 31.25 is not 'she laughs without fear of the future' but 'she will rejoice in time to come'. She who is clothed in strength and dignity, though she may be afraid, *will* rejoice. Oh, I would love to laugh and be unafraid. But I can't. And that's okay. I trust that in my fear I am loved and held by God, I trust in the promise that the Spirit is in us and with us in our time of trial, and I trust that we *will* rejoice in the time to come.

[\(Alice Jolley\)](#)

A moment

Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid.



A procession

For some people this Sunday is 'Rogation' Sunday, the day when the bounds of a parish are traditionally 'beaten' or walked, and God's blessing was prayed for on a community.

[Click here to download](#) a Rogation procession that you can do at home.

[\(Danny Pegg\)](#)

A crowd sourced Lockdown Twittany



God snuck home.
No longer bound by the
expectations of a ‘consecrated’
building
She’s concentrated her efforts on
breaking out.

Now in the comfort of a well worn
dining table she shares some bread,
with some friends.
And she laughs.
And she weeps.
In the sacred space of home.

[@ruthmw](#)

They said you could only find her
outside the window
In the shop bought bread, in the
myriad of different breads at the
counter
She shut the window and turned to
the flour, the yeast, the raw
ingredients
She knew otherwise..... she smiled.

[@CherylH01416868](#)

Christa makes herself at home,
in a pinny as holy as any vestment,
rolling up her sleeves,
ready to get stuck in
to the messy business of life.

Where else would she be but here,
amid the everyday miracles that feed
us,
the rising of daily bread?

[@ruth_hw](#)

I am sour dough, he said;
Yeast from a young mother
Aroma that dances in your kitchen,
Scents every dinner table
Sacrament.

Encircling every domestic dwelling

[@emergentkiwi](#)

God appears through the locked
bathroom door,
Announces, “here: a moment’s
peace be with you”.
Offers the gathered crumbs of the
overshared,

And a cup,
And a bath outpoured.
And when the cries interrupt (of
course)
She sighs with your sigh too deep
for words
Blesses your body given for them,
Her children too.
Consecration of another kind
For a different sort of set apart time

@BethjAllison

God settles in the chair, where
Once I poured out my body for you,
In placental kicks, twists
Of laboured pain and soft nuzzled
breast.

God gathers up the fragments of
lost hope,
Scattered tears, tantrums, fears.
Take and eat She whispers
Be whole with brokenness.

@alicelydiajoy

Mine is the empty womb,
disincarnate,
loved ones on a flickering screen,

no real presence here -
only the *noli me tangere*,
the empty tomb,
and the womb that weeps
its tears of blood and birth
into the fertile earth.

@TinaBeattie

In a body returning from a 12 hour
shift with no PPE

- broken bread

In blood spilled by someone who
should have made home a sacred
space

- wine outpoured

In the homes where the wine and
bread was running out,
She was also present and suffering in
the darker corners of empire.

@lucaslerner

I am here, she says,
In your worries and your fears.
In your laughter,
The birdsong and the silence.
In the voices of your neighbours I
am here.

I am here, she says, with you.
Never captive in a building
I am everywhere, she says.
I am known where love is
And I am here with you

[@kingdomembracer](#)

God walks in the garden
As once before...
This time, no need to fear.
Rejoice with God in creation.
See the flowers,
Hear the birdsong,
Feel the sun.
Know that in grief, in joy,
In frustration and in fear,
In friendship and in laughter,
God is with you here.

[@mandyhstanton](#)

Why she asks, why all this fuss?
See it is I, I am.
I make the bread special, strange,
extraordinary.
It is my touch, that cleanses the
leper.
My touch, my voice that shouts
resurrection.

Come my child, my dear one,
Break bread with me and stay?

See my hands, scarred, charred,
Rough and ready from bread, dust
and salvation.

Bruised from those wounds found
on a cross.

See my hands, working, domestic,
In all that shakes and is alive.

Her hands reach, from beyond that
kitchen table,

To the heart of things, my heart

[@Kirkylesprigg](#)

And Christ finds the disciples,
once more behind closed doors,
and Christ walks beside those out
for their daily walk,
and breathes the Spirit into them,
and they recognise God in the
everyday,
and in their homes.

[@revCTStAndrews](#)

In my eyrie
Above the silent city
I place bread and wine

By the blank screen
And wait.
Soon the saints will assemble .
The centre of the circle
That has no circumference
But enfolds us all
Will be: here.
Break the bread. Pour the wine.
Love one another.

@patriciastoat

Palm Sunday on the pilgrimage
and time to bless the crosses
we had folded with bitter fingers.

The priest kneels in mud
breaking and blessing a puddle
scooping water
joyfully throwing shards of freezing
blessing.

I narrow my eyes into
the glare of low sun,
remember the need to stay clear-
eyed
to wipe away the muck.

I put my hands in my pockets
keeping the embers of my anger
warmed.

The promise that
“the axe is laid unto the root of the
trees”.

@pilgrimage

([Ruth Wells](#) & [Luke Lerner](#))



A response

How do you respond to the words of
this ‘twittany’?

Elements of it respond to dispute
over the ‘domestication’ of the church
due to the lockdown, what is your
reaction to this?

Which of the verses is most
immediately meaningful to you?

Which parts did you struggle with?

To what might you return?



[\(Liz Chart\)](#)

A thought

Waking (an extract from 'Silence in Ordinary')

The waking moment occupies a place in the myth of primal creation. It is as pristine as untrodden snow. Nothing has yet happened or been remembered. Yesterday is still half buried in sleep. Today is not yet quite today. It is a primal moment, but also

part of the rhythm and continuation of life. If it has been a good night, unbroken by sudden noise or intrusive dreams, or sickness, or anxiety, I wake to a moment of pristine clarity, of openness to the possible.

As I waken further I sense the leftovers of yesterday, the will to become something, or someone. There is something needed to fill the void, some incentive for becoming.

In the moment of waking I am returned to either hope or disillusionment. Either way, I sense the need for something that will give me mastery over myself and over the circumstances of the day that lies ahead. I also sense that the fragile emptiness I experienced immediately on waking needs to be preserved.

It is tempting to want to return to that pre-wakened moment, to the emptiness. I may try to remember it but it will not allow itself to be remembered because it does not belong to the present. Waking obliges me to come to terms with the reality

of the present. So the moment of waking can be angry, or reluctant, or fearful. It can come as a rude interruption of an alarm of some kind, or in a companion's voice, or a creature's physical presence. However it comes, I experience it as an ejection into consciousness and into the noise of the ordinary of which I immediately become a part.

If we are to learn silence we need to accept that the noise of the ordinary is part of us, so true silence does not necessarily require the absence of all noise. It is not an escape from, but an escape into. It is what the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins calls 'inscape', finding ones place in a deeper reality, something solid and constant that defies the superficial and the transient. For this to be possible, silence has to be learned. This is not just a question of mastering certain techniques, although these can be helpful. It is more a question of desire. Learning silence has to be conscious and deliberate, but also a matter of allowing, of acceptance and of letting

be, so that one can receive something greater than oneself.

True silence is not something to be worked at. We seldom arrive at silence by trying to block out all the things that make up our lives, the things we write off as 'distractions'. These things, or people, or sounds, are to be treated with a kind of reverence, so what we often dismiss as distractions, when we are striving for inner silence, are a part of the fabric of life, its 'stuff'. Without them we exist in a very partial way.

Thought of like this, the rude awakening of an alarm, or a child crying, or a dog barking, is to be allowed, even embraced. You could say that simply allowing it, rather than resisting it, sets the day on a different trajectory. It hallows, or blesses, the ordinary.

(Lorraine Cavanaugh)



shhhhhh...

A verse

But God's already made it plain how
to live, what to do, what the divine
seeks in men and women.

It's quite simple: Do what is fair and
just to your neighbour, be
compassionate and loyal in your love,

And don't take yourself too seriously
– take God seriously.

Micah 6:8

A closing

“Miss no single opportunity of
making some small sacrifice, here by a
smiling look, there by a kindly word;
always doing the smallest right and
doing it all for love.”

(St. Thérèse of Lisieux)

P.S. *This Sunday marks the end of 'Christian Aid Week' - usually a high-profile fundraising event for the charity. For reasons we can all understand, it's been a little different this year - but the work of lifting people out of poverty is still needed, and the Global Poor have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. If you are able, it would be fantastic if you could consider making a donation <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>*

This series is curated by [Andy Campbell](#) and [Simon Cross](#). This edition features contributions from:

Steve Bird (hairy monastic cave/mountain dude), Andy Campbell (life coach & poet), Lorraine Cavanagh (priest & author), Liz Chart (observer, sense-tester & way finder), Simon Cross (writer), Charlotte Gibson (podcaster, artist & writer), Alice Jolley (curate, lover of words), Mark Kensett (photographer), Luke Larner (ordinand, ragamuffin poet, street chaplain), Emma Moreton (artist, activist, agitator), Sally Nash (theologian, priest, author of 'Shame in the Church'), Amaka Okafor (actor), Danny Pegg (priest, curate, playwright, nerd), Sounds Like Reign (roots gospel musicians), Barry Taylor (philosopher, theologian, musician & artist), Ruth Wells (creative agitator, priest & performance poet).